PM's Office clarifies China agreement as development cooperation, not security deal

By Ezra Toara Apr 22, 2026 Updated Apr 27, 2026 0

By Jane Joshua

The Office of the Prime Minister of Vanuatu has clarified that ongoing discussions with the People's Republic of China do not involve a security agreement, but rather a comprehensive development cooperation arrangement.

The clarification follows earlier claims from a senior source in Australia who told *Daily Post* that Vanuatu may be moving toward a security deal with China. However, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) firmly rejected this, stating that the agreement under discussion is focused on development cooperation with one of Vanuatu's long-standing partners. Officials emphasised that cooperation with China, as with all of Vanuatu's partners, centres on infrastructure development, capacity building, and economic support—areas aligned with the country's national development priorities. They added that such cooperation strictly adheres to the principles of respect for Vanuatu's sovereignty and independence.

The Government reiterated Vanuatu's long-standing position as a non-aligned nation, maintaining that it will continue to foster friendly relations with all partners. "We value all our partnerships with Australia, China, and all our development partners who respect our sovereignty," the PMO stated.

It further stressed that Vanuatu's foreign policy is guided by its national interests, adding that the country will make its own decisions without external pressure or influence.

In a separate response earlier, the Embassy of China in Vanuatu echoed similar sentiments, stating that China–Vanuatu cooperation, as comprehensive strategic partners, is focused on infrastructure development and capacity building. The Embassy reaffirmed that Chinese assistance follows the principles of respecting Vanuatu's sovereignty, independence, and national priorities.

The PMO also dismissed suggestions that Vanuatu's partnerships could negatively impact visa arrangements or other bilateral matters, describing such claims as unhelpful and inconsistent with the country's values. It noted that, as a Small Island Developing State, Vanuatu engages with multiple partners to advance its development goals.

Regarding the Nakamal Agreement with Australia, officials stated that delays in finalising the agreement are not linked to China, and that discussions are ongoing to ensure any agreement reflects Vanuatu's long-term interests.

The Government's clarification comes after a senior source in Australia, speaking on condition of anonymity, told the *Daily Post* that reports of a possible security agreement have raised concerns within diplomatic circles. The source suggested that such a development, if confirmed, could have implications for Vanuatu's existing arrangements with Australia, particularly in areas such as mobility and visa access.

"We are aware of reports Vanuatu might soon sign a security deal with China. Obviously, this could affect agreements with Australia, especially on visas that we know Prime Minister Napat has been advocating for," the source said.

Meanwhile, the *Daily Post* understands that a separate agreement has been signed between China and the Vanuatu Police Force. This arrangement is not a security pact but rather focuses on support and development, including the provision of equipment such as boats, vehicles, and motorbikes to the Vanuatu Mobile Force.

Authorities maintain that this cooperation is aimed at strengthening operational capacity and does not constitute a broader security agreement between the two governments.

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